THE FIRST TIME I HEARD THE RUMOUR THAT MY FATHER WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR WAS IN THIRD GRADE
I IGNORED THE GOSSIP-MONGER IN MY CLASS WHO HAD SUPPOSEDLY BEEN AN EYE-WITNESS,
BUT DEEP DOWN, I WAS FURIOUS
MY FATHER WAS A WONDERFUL MAN.
I DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HIS WORK, BUT HE WAS AN ELITE WORKING IN A HUGE CORPO-RATION.
ALTHOUGH HE WAS RARELY HOME, HE WAS VERY KIND WHEN HE RETURNED. MY MOTHER LOVED HIM, TOO.
ONCE A WEEK.. NO, ABOUT ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS, HE WOULD RETURN AND LIGHT UP OUR HOME.

"I WAS BORN TO THE WORLD'S KINDEST MOTHER AND THE WORLD'S COOLEST FATHER, SO I MUST BE THE HAPPIEST KID IN THE WORLD."
THAT'S NOT A JOKE. I SERIOUSLY BELIEVED THAT.
Chapter 9
Kagami Hokuto
SEE YOU LATER, HOKUTO-CHAN!
YEAH! BYE!
I'VE GOT TO GO HOME EARLY! TOMORROW'S THE DAY DAD COMES HOME, SO I SHOULD CLEAN MY ROOM...

HUH?
DAD?
WEL-
COME
HOME,
DAD!
I'M BACK.
NOW LET'S
GO INSIDE.
WHY...WHY!?
THAT'S MY
DAD, RIGHT?
W...
WHY...?
WHY ARE YOU
ACTING THE
SAME WAY YOU
DO AROUND
MOM?

CONFUSION, SADNESS, AND ANGER I EXPERIENCED ALL THESE EMOTIONS MIXED TOGETHER WITH HOPELESSNESS, WHICH I NOW TRULY UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF
WHY WHY WHY WHY?
HUH...
IS BECAUSE THAT'S NOT HIS HOME IN THE FIRST PLACE...
THE REASON HE'S NEVER HOME...
AHH... AAAAAHHHHH... I GET IT... I GET IT NOW...
MY FATHER WASN'T CHEATING ON MY MOTHER WITH SOMEONE ELSE IT WAS THE OTHER WAY AROUND
MY MOTHER WAS JUST HIS MISTRESS

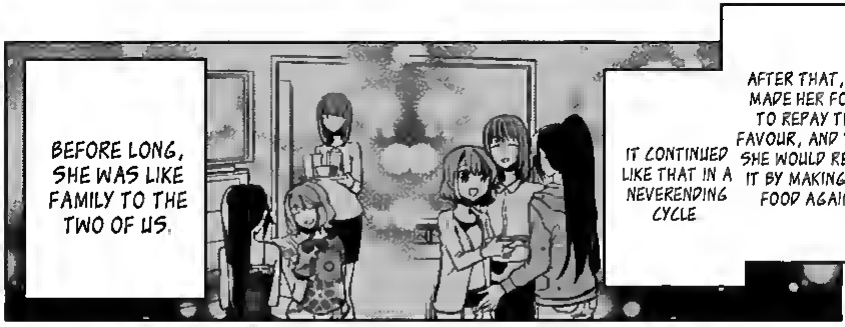
I WOULD FIGHT TO ENDURE ALL THE DIFFERENT EMOTIONS SWIRLING IN MY GUT, MAKING ME SICK.
You got 100 on the test? That's my girl, you're so smart!
HE BEGAN COMING HOME LESS AND LESS, BUT ONCE IN A WHILE HE WOULD COME AND WHISPER SWEET NOTHINGS INTO MY MOTHER'S EARS, EAT DINNER, AND PAT MY HEAD.
SINCE THEN, MY FATHER HAS COMPLETELY REPULSED ME.
MY FATHER HAD MISTRESSES OTHER THAN MY MOTHER.
I REALIZED SOMETHING EVEN WORSE THE YEAR I ENTERED FIFTH GRADE.
HE WAS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT TYPE OF EXISTENCE TO ME THE WORST SCUM OF MANKIND.
I FELT BETTER IF I THOUGHT OF HIM AS COMPLETELY UNRELATED TO ME, LIKE THINKING OF HIM AS BEING A COCKROACH. THAT KIND OF THING.
FOR HIM, IT WAS LIKE PURCHASING VACATION HOMES AND VILLAS EVERYWHERE.
HE WAS "THAT" KIND OF PERSON
IT WAS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

SHE WASN'T THE KIND OF PERSON TO BE SOMEONE'S MISTRESS. SHE WAS A PURE AND CANDID PERSON
HER UPBRINGING LEFT HER WITH A GENTLE AND EASYGOING PERSONALITY, BUT SHE WAS FRAIL AND UNRELIABLE
SHE WAS BORN INTO A GOOD FAMILY WITH A SHELTERED UPBRINGING, SO SHE HAD SOME TROUBLE WITH NAVIGATING DAILY LIFE, PLUS SHE HAD NO ONE TO RELY ON, HAVING SEVERED TIES WITH HER FAMILY WHEN SHE RAN OFF WITH HIM
IT SEEMS LIKE THAT GUY WAS ACTUALLY SOME RIDICULOUS BIG SHOT, SO OUR LIVING EXPENSES WERE COVERED, BUT MY MOTHER BEGAN BREAKING DOWN MENTALLY
ALTHOUGH I COULD DISTANCE MYSELF LIKE THIS, MY MOTHER COULD DO NO SUCH THING
YES! 100 PERCENT AGAIN! I WONDER HOW MOM WILL REACT...
SHE WAS THE ONLY FAMILY I HAD LEFT, AFTER ALL, WHICH WAS ALL THE MORE REASON FOR ME TO TRY TO MAKE HER LIFE BETTER
I LOVED MY MOTHER, AND I WANTED TO SEE HER STABLE AND HAPPY.
GOOD JOB, HOKUTO-CHAN! THAT'S MY GIRL, MY PRIDE AND JOY!
LOOK, MOM!
NO MATTER HOW WEAK HER SMILE WAS, THAT WAS MY ONLY HAPPINESS.
ALTHOUGH I COULD ONLY SHOW THAT I WAS DOING WELL ACADEMICALLY... I WENT AT IT WITH AN UNUSUAL DESPERATION

-BUT
welcome home!
HOW LONG ARE YOU STAYING!?
AH, I HAVE TO LEAVE FOR WORK TOMORROW.
THEN LET'S NOT WASTE ANY TIME! LET'S HAVE DINNER! I HAVE SO MUCH I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT!
COMPARED TO THE MINUSCULE HAPPINESS WE HAD, THE WAY HE WAS ABLE TO MAKE HER SMILE WITHOUT ANY EFFORT WAS LIKE AN INSULT...
MY MOTHER WOULD BECOME FIDGETY AND RESTLESS ON THE DAYS BEFORE HE CAME HOME, AND THEN WHEN HE LEFT, DESPAIRED AS IF THE WORLD WAS ENDING
THE FLUCTUATIONS OF HER EMOTIONS BECAME WORSE EVERY TIME HE CAME HOME, AND THAT EVENTUALLY GOT TO ME AS WELL. IT WAS MUCH TOO LARGE OF AN ISSUE FOR A MIDDLE SCHOOLER TO BE SADDLED WITH.

AND FINALLY, ON THE DAY I ENTERED MY SECOND YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL...
I'M BA-
HOKUTO-CHAN, WHAT'S WRONG...? HAHA, YOU'RE SUCH A WEIRD GIRL
MY MOTHER ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.
M...MOM... THE WIND IS PRETTY STRONG TODAY. THAT'S DANGEROUS...
IN THAT SITUATION... SHE WAS DEFINITELY GOING TO JUMP!!!
IN REALITY, SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING SUICIDE
I MIGHT'VE JUST BEEN OVERTHINKING IT
ALL THAT I CAN SAY WITH CERTAINTY IS THAT WE WERE QUIETLY FORCED INTO A CORNER LIKE THIS...

AND JUST LIKE THAT, NEAR THE END OF MARCH, "ONEE-SAN" MOVED INTO THE APARTMENT NEXT TO US.
NICE TO MEET YOU, I'LL BE YOUR NEIGHBOUR FROM NOW ON!
UM, HOKUTO-CHAN, YOU'RE 2 YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME, HUH?
AH, YES
I'M COMMUTING TO A HIGH-SCHOOL NEARBY, SO COULD YOU HELP ME WITH THE ROADS AROUND THIS AREA SOME-TIME?
I-IF I CAN BE OF HELP, THEN...
THAT'S GREAT! YOU'RE MORE FAMILIAR WITH THIS TOWN THAN I AM, SO I'LL BE RELYING ON YOU!
SHE SEEMED MORE MATURE THAN USUAL FOR A HIGH SCHOOL FRESH-MAN, YET SHE HAD AN ALMOST CHILDISH AND SOCIABLE SIDE.
GOOD AFTER-NOON, KAGAMI-SAN!
SINCE IT'S MY FIRST TIME LIVING ALONE I ACCIDENTALLY MADE TOO MUCH CURRY, SO I'VE COME TO SHARE MY LEFTOVERS.
WOW, IS THAT ALRIGHT WITH YOU?
TAKE AS MUCH AS YOU WANT! CURRY IS BETTER THE DAY AFTER ANYWAY!
WE DIDN'T INTERACT WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS MUCH, BUT ONEE-SAN WAS THE EXCEPTION.
SHE ACCEPTED OUR FAMILY, THE SOCIAL RECLUSE OF A MISTRESS AND HER DAUGHTER

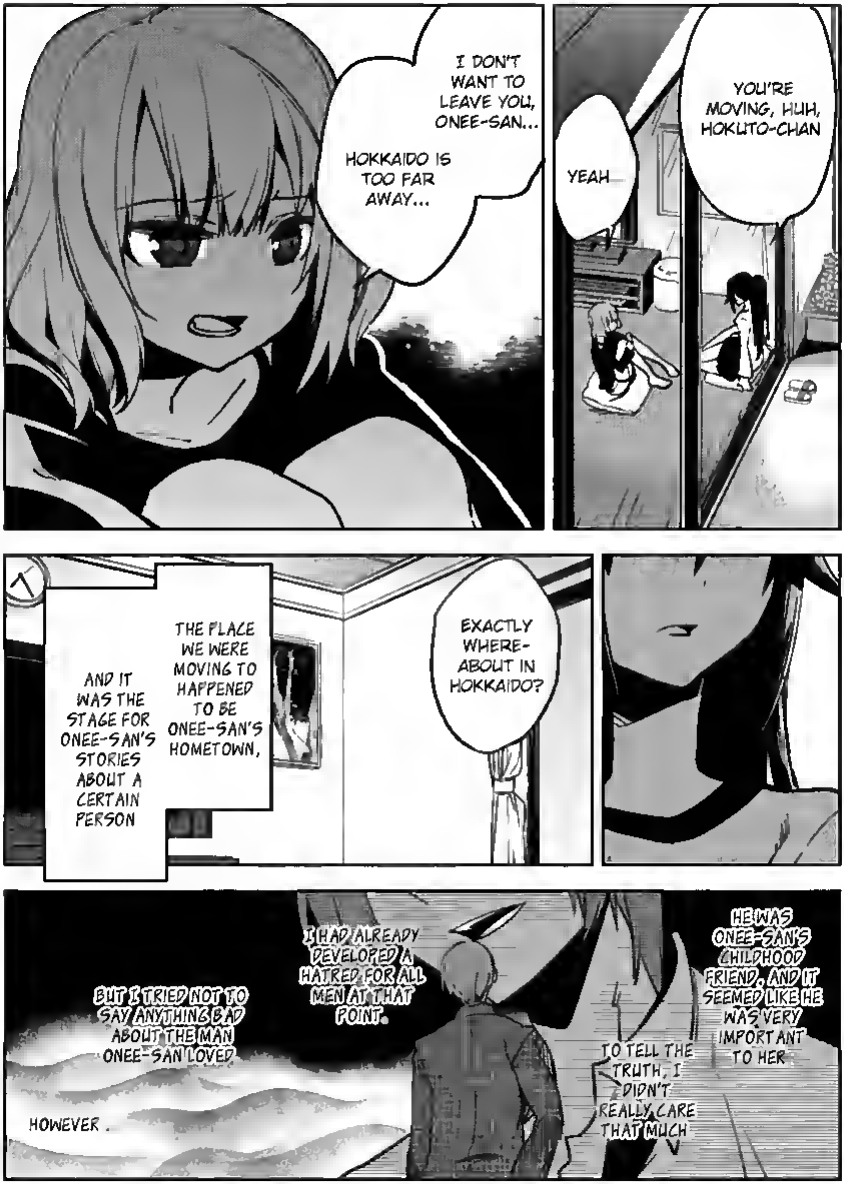

BEFORE LONG, SHE WAS LIKE FAMILY TO THE TWO OF US.
IT CONTINUED LIKE THAT IN A NEVERENDING CYCLE
AFTER THAT, WE MADE HER FOOD TO REPAY THE FAVOUR, AND THEN SHE WOULD REPAY IT BY MAKING US FOOD AGAIN.

OF COURSE THAT HAPPINESS DIDN'T LAST LONG.

MOVING?

HE...
WE'RE GOING TO BE SEPARATED FROM ONEE-SAN!
WHAT, HOKKAIDO!? WHY ARE WE GOING THAT FAR!?
WHY? WHERE?
HE TOLD US TO GO...
W... WHY...?
AND THEN, MOM WILL
OUR SIMPLE HAPPINESS, HE'S GOING TO TAKE IT AWAY
HE'S GOING TO STEAL IT AWAY AGAIN

WHY!?
I'LL NEVER BE HAPPY LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE-HOLD AS HIM!
IN FACT, IT'LL BE MISERABLE! I DON'T WANT TO!
MOM, WHO ARE YOU GOING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ME AND HIM!?
.....
ANSWER ME!! SAY SOME-THING!!!
MY MOTHER WOULDN'T BUDGE.
SHE WAS A WOMAN BEFORE SHE WAS A MOTHER
NO MATTER HOW STUPID I THOUGHT SHE WAS, NO MATTER HOW MUCH I LOOKED DOWN ON HER FOR THAT CHOICE, I COULDN'T ABANDON MY MOTHER
AND SO, ALONG WITH ME ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL, WE WERE GOING TO MOVE FAR, FAR AWAY


I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU, ONEE-SAN...
HOKKAIDO IS TOO FAR AWAY...
YOU'RE MOVING, HUH, HOKUTO-CHAN
YEAH...
EXACTLY WHERE-ABOUT IN HOKKAIDO?
THE PLACE WE WERE MOVING TO HAPPENED TO BE ONEE-SAN'S HOMETOWN,
AND IT WAS THE STAGE FOR ONEE-SAN'S STORIES ABOUT A CERTAIN PERSON
HE WAS ONEE-SAN'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND, AND IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO HER
I HAD ALREADY DEVELOPED A HATRED FOR ALL MEN AT THAT POINT.
TO TELL THE TRUTH, I DIDN'T REALLY CARE THAT MUCH
BUT I TRIED NOT TO SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT THE MAN ONEE-SAN LOVED.
HOWEVER,

ONCE I FOUND OUT HE WAS THE SAME TYPE OF PERSON AS THAT, THAT GUY...
MY ATTI-TUDE CHAN-GED.

WHAT IS IT?

HEY, HOKUTO-CHAN, CAN YOU LISTEN TO ME FOR A BIT?
I SEE.

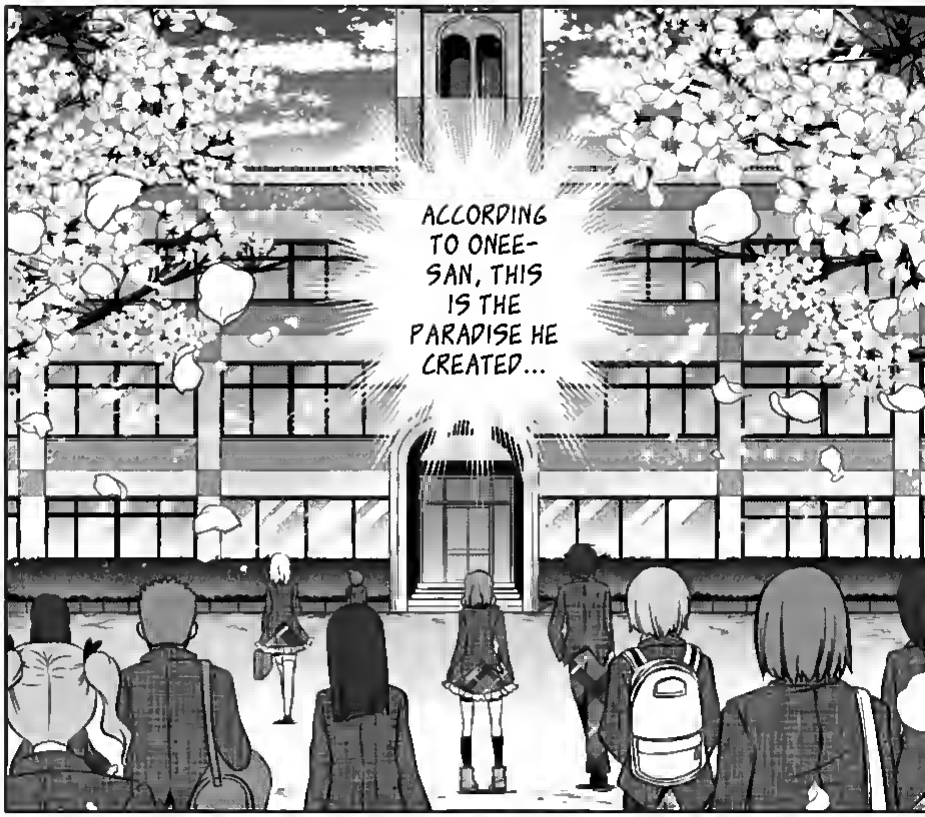
HOKUTO-CHAN, DID YOU DECIDE ON WHAT HIGH SCHOOL TO GO TO YET?
HMM, NOT YET...

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT GOING BACK FOR THAT GUY.
IS THAT SO? GOOD LUCK!
YOU THINK I CAN DO IT? WILL I BE OKAY?
OF COURSE YOU CAN. IT'S YOU AFTER ALL!
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT! I'LL BE OKAY IF I TRY MY BEST! THANKS!
AND... I'VE BEEN THINKING...
IF HE'S READY TO ACCEPT US NOW...
..."US"...?
I WAS HORRIFIED.

ONEE-SAN'S SMILE THEN
WAS THE EXACT SAME AS THE ONE MY MOTHER SHOWED TO THAT MAN.

I STARTED GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT ONEE-SAN'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND FROM HER.
I WANT TO LISTEN TO ALL OF ONEE-SAN'S STORIES BEFORE I LEAVE,
IS THAT OKAY...?
THAT'S FINE. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT?
About the childhood friend you keep talking about!
ABOUT HIS PAST WITH ONEE-SAN,
ABOUT HIS STEP SISTER,
AND ABOUT WHAT HE'S DOING RIGHT NOW.
WHEN I WAS DONE, A SINGLE GOAL HAD FORMED IN MY MIND.
AFTER WE WERE DONE TALKING, I DIDN'T EVEN GO HOME RIGHT AWAY INSTEAD, I FOUND A LIST OF THE HIGH SCHOOLS IN THAT AREA, PICKED OUT "THAT SCHOOL" AND SENT IN AN APPLICATION
UNFORTUNATELY, IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL ONEE-SAN WAS APPLYING TO

Heiyon Academy
Entrance Ceremony


ACCORDING TO ONEE-SAN, THIS IS THE PARADISE HE CREATED...

Hello!
Do you know where the first years are supposed to meet?
AH, HELLO...
Wow, she's energetic
SORRY! I JUST MOVED HERE FROM THE MAINLAND SO I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON!
AH, YOU'RE FROM THE CITY?
WELL, THAT'S ABOUT RIGHT! LET'S BE FRIENDS!
I'M STARTING MY MISSION
IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TROUBLE, CAN YOU TEACH ME EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS SCHOOL?
I'm so glad you're here
NICE TO MEET YOU TOO!
I'VE GONE OVER MY PLAN TO DESTROY HIS HAREM, FOR THE GUY WHO'S THE SAME TYPE OF SCUM AS MY FATHER, OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD. IN THE MEANTIME, I'VE CREATED A CUTE UNDERCLASSMAN CHARACTER TO SUIT HIS TASTES.

SO THAT ONEE-SAN WILL NEVER FOLLOW THE SAME PATH MY MOTHER TOOK...
I'M GOING TO CRUSH ONEE-SAN, MATSUBARA ASUKA'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND, SUGISAKI KEN.
3巻につづく―